

## Budget cuts to spell lean schooling for children

When Latino children return to school from their upcoming summer vacation, they will find new holes in the fabric of their education. Federal politicians are battling to see who can cut the most from the federal budget. Decision-makers say they are hearing little public outcry. It all adds up to a discussion not of whether education and youth programs will be drastically cut, but which ones and by how much. Congressional leaders say they are cutting wasteful subsidies; unfortunately much of what they consider waste are programs our children and their families rely on for education, job training, and basic needs.

Three funding debates are underway: 1) **Rescissions**, cuts in this year's budget of money that had been approved but is not yet spent; 2) **Budget resolutions**, the broad spending targets that will shape next year's budget; and 3) **Appropriations bills** that will implement the budget cuts.

As *ASPIRA News* goes to press, President Clinton

is vowing to veto the rescissions bill approved by a House/Senate conference on May 16. The bill would cut \$16.4 billion from the current federal budget, including \$875 million from the Department of Education budget, \$871 million from next summer's youth employment programs, and \$210 million from the AmeriCorps national service program.

The budget resolution proposed by the House would eliminate the Department of Education. The Senate resolution proposes cutting 33% of all federal education funds. Appropriators will begin debate over the summer.

Several national Hispanic organizations have been working hard to counter at least some of the more striking measures. The Hispanic Education Coalition, of which ASPIRA is a part, is spearheading the effort (*see related stories - p. 2 and 7*).

## ASPIRA/AmeriCorps : "Getting Things Done" in the Latino Community

ASPIRA/AmeriCorps members in Bridgeport, Connecticut; Newark, New Jersey; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, have embraced the AmeriCorps slogan of "Getting Things Done" by working to improve their communities from the bottom up. In the eight months since the program began, the national ASPIRA/AmeriCorps program has 38 full-time volunteers in middle schools and community centers engaged in after-school tutoring and

extracurricular programs, teacher assistance, working with parents, promoting public safety, and participating in conflict mediation. So far, over 350 students and 200 parents have been recruited and served by ASPIRA/AmeriCorps education and public safety programs.

Schools are providing office and classroom space and other resources to the ASPIRA/AmeriCorps members in exchange



Luz Negron, ASPIRA of New Jersey AmeriCorps member, helps a student in Newark.

for members' services. The ASPIRA program has also developed partnerships with over 40 commu-

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## Director's Corner



In my last columns I discussed why a new mobilization to improve the education of our children is imperative: the worsening condition of the education of our children that ravages our youth and threatens our future; the growing, relentless, racist attacks on who we are, our right to be here and to have equal opportunity; and the opportunity we now have to produce change because of the current environment of education reform. ~~I expected to dedicate this column to why this mobilization is possible—our organizational strengths, our growing unity and our collective experience.~~

However, the recent actions of the new Congress and the devastating effect these will have, demand that we all turn our attention to stopping this assault on our children, on our communities and on our future. We cannot stand by and watch Congress and states take from us the few gains we have made in education over the past three decades. The entire Hispanic community, *all of us*—educators, parents, community groups, churches, national and local organizations—must stand together and vigorously voice our outrage. And we must do it now!

Congress is proposing cuts in all the programs that have helped advance Hispanics. In higher education these include college access and retention programs, interest subsidies on student loans, and Pell grants—programs which

for many Hispanic youth are the only keys to a college education. In elementary and secondary, cuts are proposed to Title I aid to disadvantaged students, Bilingual Education, which we have fought for even in the courts, dropout prevention programs, and the new AmeriCorps National Service program. All these and many others would go—and so would the future of millions of Hispanic students. Just look through this newsletter to see who will be affected. If we don't respond, if our voice is not heard, education programs will be cut, some completely.

The argument that the federal deficit is mortgaging the future of the country may be accurate. But balancing the budget at the expense of education is to destroy the very base of our productiveness in the future. How are we going to survive as a nation, much less prosper, if millions are uneducated? And it will be us, Hispanics, with our young and growing population on the cusp of success, who will end up paying.

As an example, for decades thousands of Aspirantes have received advice, support, and the practical skills necessary to apply and succeed in college from ASPIRA counselors hired through the federal Talent Search program. Many of these young people tell us their ASPIRA counselor was the only one who ever encouraged them to go to college. Yet Congress is debating the total elimination of Talent Search.

ASPIRA has been working hard over the past year with a host of

national organizations to stop this onslaught. But no single organization's work is enough. We need to use our collective strength, the full mobilization of our community. **I urge all of you to organize locally, organize in schools and churches, write to members of Congress, and let them know that we will not allow economic tinkering to eliminate our hopes for a better future for our children.**

We know that Congress is doing more than just trying to balance the budget. It is pushing a broader social agenda that is a direct assault on us and on the future of our children. The programs proposed for elimination are directly targeted to help poor children, immigrant children, minority children and their communities. Federal education and training programs may be only a small portion of the total amount spent on such efforts by states and localities. But federal monies are targeted to those of us who have been historically left out of such programs. They provide one of the few safeguards to equality of opportunity for our community. Once those funds are gone, we know from experience how little equality we will see.

I believe we have the collective strength to make our voices heard. I know that this is a critical moment for our generation, when we either continue to advance or we fall into the abyss. I call on all who are reading these words to put down this newsletter and mobilize **now**. Our children are depending on us.



### News from around the Association

**ASPIRA** of Connecticut hopes to incorporate a space program into its AmeriCorps After-School Program. This is an effort to stimulate students' interest in related subjects and careers in math and science ... Last fall, ASPIRA/AmeriCorps collaborated with students at Luis Munoz Marin Middle School to provide a Thanksgiving dinner to the elderly; visited two convalescent homes; sponsored a clothing drive for the needy; and has since formed partnerships with several organizations. **Melissa Oquendo** is working on Bridgeport's street lighting problem in partnership with a local Empowerment Zone, while **Alessandra Maya**, **Evelisse Cardozo** and **Evelyn Rivera** are partners with the Drug Education for Youth Program as mentors for children. **Jennifer Telsa** is in partnership with the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, helping to create a City Budget Report.

**ASPIRA of Florida** sponsored *Increase the Peace Anti-Drug, Violence/ Gang Awareness Week*, an effort to stem the tide of violence overtaking our youth. The week's activities included a poster contest, flag ceremony, and a parade and rally. The week was kicked off with welcoming remarks by **Raul Martinez**, Executive Director, and remarks by **Joseph Pinon**, Board Chairman. City of Miami Commissioner **Wilfredo Gort** presented a proclamation. The week also featured a

*Peace Begins With Me Candlelight Vigil*, a discussion panel of students, professionals and community participants speaking about the *Causes, Effects and Solutions of Gangs, Crime, Violence and Drug Abuse*. Most events were held at the Roberto Clemente Park and were funded by a Governor's Drug Free Schools Grant.



Aspirantes carry *ASPIRA* Banner in parade at Florida Increase the Peace Week.

The **ASPIRA** of Illinois APEX parents' program graduated a class of twenty-one parents in its first group for 1994-95. Training is provided to parents from five schools in the Chicago area. Facilitators have implemented two new workshops into the current APEX Training, including a *Local School Council* workshop and a *Bilingual Education Funding* workshop. As a result of these workshops, many parents have decided to volunteer at their neighborhood schools.

ASPIRA of New Jersey participated in *Word Up: Stop the Violence*, a televised Town Meeting with Governor Christine Todd Whitman and actor Edward James Olmos. Seventy-five Aspirantes took part in the discussion regarding juvenile violence and what the New Jersey is doing about it. Mr. Olmos discussed the nature of gangs found in other parts of the country. The show was produced by former Aspirante and TV Producer William Q. Sanchez, who is also producer of *IMAGENES Latinas*.

ASPIRA of New York has been running two Beacon community schools with grants from the New York City Department of Youth Services. Beacon schools are school-based community centers that link organizations and schools to provide support to youth and families after school, evenings, and on weekends. The program provides safe havens within drug-free zones for youth and adults. It also offers social, recreational, educational and cultural activities. ASPIRA of New York Beacon project is called BEAM (Building Educational Aspirantes and Multiculturalism) ... The New York office recently helped develop and organize '*Miunete!*' a Puerto Rican youth conference held at Columbia University. The conference was co-sponsored by the National Latinas Caucus, Puerto Rican Association of Latinas Caucus, and Puerto Rican Association of Community Affairs ... The office's Project ADEPT brought out the dancers for its Merengue Marathon March 3. Proceeds

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## ASPIRA testifies before President's Commission on Hispanic education

The President's Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans met in Washington, D.C., in January to discuss a workplan and agree on strategic approaches for the year. The Commission heard testimony from both ASPIRA National Executive Director Ronald Blackburn-Moreno and Hilda Crespo, ASPIRA's Director of Education and Federal Affairs. Blackburn-Moreno presented the commission with education policy recommendations to improve the education of Puerto Rican and other Latino students which were developed at the Boricua First! Conference held last October.

Hilda Crespo and Elena Rios, National Hispanic Medical Association, who co-chair the National Hispanic Leadership Committee for Health and Science Recruitment, presented several recommendations related to health policy.

The Commissioners were also the special guests of U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley at his Annual State of American Education Address. Secretary Riley spoke highly of the Commission and introduced them to the nation via satellite.

Later that day he addressed the Commission directly at a special swearing-in ceremony officiated by Vice President Al Gore.



Members of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, which includes several former ASPIRA staff and board members, meet with U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley.

## ASPIRA of New Jersey holds 18th Annual Luncheon

With the slogan, "Journey into the 21st Century: Partnerships for the Future," over 300 community and business leaders and elected officials from throughout the state joined ASPIRA of New Jersey in its 18th Annual Luncheon.

Christine Todd Whitman, Governor of New Jersey, delivered the keynote address. She praised ASPIRA for its years of service to the Hispanic community in New Jersey. Governor Todd-Whitman called for increased efforts to raise standards and improve the effectiveness of schools, and encouraged all members of the community to actively participate in standards-setting forums across the state. Also addressing the audience was the Mayor of the City of Newark, Sharpe James, who called for unity in the community to face the difficult times ahead for cities, minorities and the poor across the country. He praised ASPIRA and pledged his full support of the proclamation to ASPIRA which stated that this year's luncheon theme "is both timely and consistent with the County of Essex's sense that such discussions are important and relevant public policy issues."

Ariel Cespedes was honored as Aspirante of the Year. Margaret Rosario-Rivera, a member of the Board and former Vice-Chair of the National Board of Directors, was also honored for her years of service. County Executive James Treffinger presented Ms. Rosario-Rivera with a laudatory proclamation.

## Philadelphia parents join reform efforts

*"Los ninos pueden aprender. Las escuelas pueden ser efectivas. Los padres y las comunidades son partes claves de la reforma escolar. Necesitamos que los padres sean parte del movimiento para cambiar nuestras escuelas!"*

—an ASPIRA parent

ASPIRA of Pennsylvania parents and several other groups recently sponsored a neighborhood meeting for the communities of Potter-Thomas, Fairhill, Welsh, Elkin, Sheridan, and Hunter Elementary Schools, Julia de Burgos and Stetson Middle Schools and Edison-Fareira High School. The goals for the meeting were to review a ten point school reform plan and to plan to build ongoing parent and citizen involvement in Philadelphia schools. The parents provided Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Hornbeck with their views on education, and agreed that, "parents and citizens must play a central role if schools are to become effective and accountable places where all young people achieve excellence."

# BORICUA FIRST! Update

The Boricua First! National Steering Committee met on February 15, to receive a draft document of the Puerto Rican agenda that was produced at the October '94 Boricua First! Conference.

The Boricua First! Conference had brought together Puerto Rican leaders from around the country to address the specific needs of the community and identify key solutions in the areas of civil rights, economic development, education, environment, health, housing, political empowerment, women, social welfare and family.

At its February meeting, the National Steering Committee decided on the next steps for the Boricua First! campaign, which will include a Legislative Day in June '95 bringing over 100 Puerto Rican leaders to Washington, D.C., to inform members of the U.S. Congress of the major issues that affect the Puerto Rican community. Subsequently, an analysis and report will be developed and used for continued local committee organizing leading to the next phase: *Puerto Rican Affirmation Day*, which will take place next year.

Finally, the Steering Committee selected officers for the Boricua First! campaign. Manuel Mirabal, President and CEO of the National Puerto Rican Coalition, will chair Boricua First! ASPIRA's Ronald Blackburn-Moreno will act as Treasurer.

The goals of Boricua First! are to implement a national campaign which brings attention to the public policy needs of the Puerto Rican community in the United States and Puerto Rico; to highlight and celebrate the contributions to society of the Puerto Rican community; to develop strategic solutions which address the public policy needs of the Puerto Rican community; and to establish the framework for a national Puerto Rican leadership network which will follow-up on the implementation of political action strategies which benefit the Puerto Rican community.

The following is selected text from recommendations of eleven areas reviewed under the education rubric of the Boricua First! Agenda. For a complete copy, call Rosie Torres, Director of Public Policy, ASPIRA National Office (202) 835-3600.

## ***Bilingual Education***

- Support quality, integrated two-way bilingual education.
- Push for clear regulations spelling out what services districts must provide.
- Mobilize the Puerto Rican community to: 1) demand accountability from districts/schools, 2) defend the existing state mandates for bilingual education, 3) pass bilingual education laws in states without such mandates.

## ***Quality Education***

- Increase the participation of Puerto Rican children in quality preschool programs by holding programs like Head Start accountable to appropriately recruit and serve the Latino community.
- Educate the community to demand an end to inappropriate "high stakes" tests--for example, as the sole criterion for advancement in grade or graduation.

## ***Professional Recruitment and Development***

- Increase the share of targeted funds going to Hispanic-serving institutions (particularly those in Puerto Rico) who are training new faculty.
- Prioritize funding for existing federal programs to increase the numbers of bilingual/bicultural teachers and counselors.

## ***Equitable School Financing***

- Demand federal oversight to ensure that federal funds supplement, not supplant state/local funds.

## ***Data Collection, Reporting and Research***

- Demand disaggregate data collection to determine how Puerto Rican children are being treated by school programs.
- Call for legislative oversight of federal departments and agencies conducting "minority" initiatives to ensure inclusion of Puerto Ricans and their representation on advisory panels.

## Parent program prepares for next successful year

APEX, the ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence program, recently hosted its second annual meeting of the APEX Advisory Committee. Members include representatives from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF); Temple University; Johns Hopkins Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning; Cornell Migrant Program; National Association of College Admissions Counselors; DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund; and APEX staff from ASPIRA of Illinois and ASPIRA of Pennsylvania.

Aurelio M. Montemayor of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in San Antonio, led two very productive days of discussion about the field experiences in Chicago and Philadelphia, program replication and dissemination, and program evaluation. ASPIRA was particularly pleased to have two parent representatives from each site this year, as well as representatives from both of the local school districts.



*The Chicago APEX program recently held a graduation ceremony for 84 parents who successfully completed the program. Lourdes Garcia, Chair of ASPIRA of Illinois, is shown awarding plaques. Thirty-nine parents in Philadelphia are also participating in an APEX parent training academy.*

### Facing the Facts

#### Bilingual Education: Numbers of limited English proficient children

*By law, school systems across the United States must provide services for children from non-English language backgrounds, many of whom have difficulty speaking English. Changes in the number and percentage of such students can affect how education resources are allocated within states.*

- Fourteen percent of all U.S. children 5 to 17 years old spoke languages other than English at home in 1990. Over a third of these had difficulty speaking English.
- Between 1980 and 1990, the number of children who had difficulty speaking English increased 27 percent, from 1.9 to 2.4 million.
- In 1990, 6 out of 10 U.S. children who had difficulty speaking English lived in three large states: California (33%), Texas (16%), and New York (10%).

**Ten states with the highest percentage of 5-to-17-year olds who speak a language other than English at home and speak English with difficulty: 1980 and 1990**

State	1980	1990	1990 %
United States	1,883,395	2,388,243	5.3
California	493,641	796,905	14.9
Texas	413,393	391,881	11.3
New Mexico	48,471	33,793	10.5
Arizona	60,213	61,069	8.2
New York	233,945	247,948	8.2
New Jersey	71,703	76,273	6.0
Hawaii	14,432	11,253	5.7
Rhode Island	6,860	8,928	5.6
Florida	66,466	113,441	5.6
Massachusetts	37,626	50,444	5.4

Source: "Climate, Classrooms, and Diversity in Educational Institutions," *The Condition of Education 1994*, U.S. Department of Education.

## ***New ASPIRA releases***

### ***Informal science education survey***

ASPIRA has released the findings of a study of informal science education programs around the country and their impact on the Latino community.

According to Hilda Crespo, project director, "Findings suggest that collaboration is one of the strongest points of informal science education."

Survey results indicated that too few programs address national or state standards in development of materials, or use technology. Less than half of the respondents integrate mentoring.

A very small number of projects prepare materials specifically for bilingual students and parents. Few indicated that the contributions of Hispanics are an integral part of the materials produced.

Copies of *Informal Science Education Survey* are available from the ASPIRA National Office for \$4.00.

### ***Bulletin offers school success tips***

TOPS, ASPIRA's national dropout prevention and parent involvement program for middle school, has begun publishing the *TOPS Bulletin* of helpful tips for parents and teachers. The first issue focus on parent involvement, highlighting basic steps for parents to get involved in their children's education and ways schools can help promote parental involvement, as well as a section on goals-setting and attainment. The next issue will focus on self-esteem. The *Bulletin* is available free of charge by contacting the TOPS Program, ASPIRA National Office.

### ***Parent involvement help available***

The most recent publications edited and reprinted by the APEX Program are: *Organizing and Working With Parent Groups: A Manual for APEX Facilitators* and *The APEX Workshop Series Manual*. These publications are available in Spanish or English for \$50 a set or \$85 for all four volumes. APEX also recently reprinted *What About College? Books 1, 2, 3*. The price for these booklets is \$5.00 each or \$12.50 for the set that helps families prepare, plan, and pay for college. Call the National Office to ask for a brochure on current APEX publications.



## ***Legislative Update***

The 103rd U.S. Congress has been turned on its heel to meet the challenges of the Republican "Contract With America," a series of legislative proposals that would change social programs as we know them.

Among the proposals is a balanced budget amendment, unfunded mandates legislation to give states and local government more power over how they can spend federal dollars, tax cuts, and anti-regulatory reforms. The White House has submitted an education budget that while increasing education dollars for some programs, eliminates or consolidates many others. Congress has proposed much deeper cuts. While these budget issues are critical (see related stories on p. 1 and 2), other proposals, if passed, will also have a major impact on urban schoolchildren and their families. Several of the education-related proposals include:

#### **Limiting Education Access for Legal Residents**

Among the proposals pushed most aggressively by legislators is a bill to deny legal residents the right to an education in America. Recently, the Hispanic Education Coalition (HEC), of which ASPIRA is a part, wrote to Congressman William F. Goodling, Chairman of the Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee, to express opposition to restrictions on alien eligibility for certain education, training, and other programs in the welfare reform legislation under consideration. According to the HEC, "the impact of this action will not only adversely affect individuals, but our society in general . . . the prohibition against Pell Grants and other student financial aid programs for legal residents will preclude their ability to attain the benefits of a postsecondary education. That in turn means they will earn less and pay less in taxes and will be less educated and productive when they do become American citizens."

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**Legislative  
Update**  
*continued*

**Eliminating Bilingual Education**

Four separate bills would make English the official language of the U.S. government, and have the government conduct its official business in English. In some of the bills, this would mean income tax forms, informational materials—even public health and safety warnings—would be available only in English. Several bills would specifically abolish bilingual education and repeal the bilingual provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

**Limiting Student Loans**

H.R. 530 would place a cap on the Direct Student Loan program at 40 percent of total volume. The DSL was to completely replace the Family Education Loan program by FY '97-'98.

**Changing Training Programs**

S.143 would merge the 1994 School-To-Work Opportunities Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Allied Technology Education Act, and other programs under a single block grant; thus giving states a lump sum of dollars to spend among these programs. S.180 would eliminate 20 federal vocational education programs by the year 1999. Another proposal would authorize \$160 million in FY '96 as state incentive grants for states to create workforce development programs. S.6 creates federally subsidized accounts to allow participants to choose training programs.

S.555 would consolidate all minority health professions education programs and decrease funding by eight percent by 1999. It would also give funding priority to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities over other institutions that train the overwhelming majority of minority health professionals, including even currently-funded Hispanic and Native American centers.

**Merging Departments**

The House Educational Opportunities Committee is considering a proposal to combine education and job training programs under one cabinet-level department. The new department may have the responsibility for programs currently run by other federal departments, including the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, and National Science Foundation. The new department would place all federal education and training programs under an assistant secretary for workforce preparation and policy.

Other programs under consideration for merging are the Department of Defense schools on military bases, the Department of Energy technology schools, the National Science Foundation science programs, and the Department of the Interior schools on Indian reservations. Moreover, a new Civil Rights Office would combine cases covered by DOL's Civil Rights Office with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. The plan would save government \$21 billion over five years.

**School Lunch Program**

The House Committee on Educational Opportunities voted to repeal the National School Lunch Act, which provides free and low cost meals to millions of America's children, vowing instead to shift the responsibility to the states. States would have the discretion to implement the program as part of a child nutrition block grant. Many states already find it difficult to raise the necessary local matching funds required to administer the program; thus, some may decide to drop out.

**FYI: School districts with the most Hispanics:**

El Paso, TX	73.7%
Los Angeles, CA	64.4%
Houston, TX	48.1%
Dade Co., FL	48.0%
Phoenix, AZ	47.1%
Denver, CO	41.2%
Dallas, TX	39.7%
Tucson, AZ	38.6%
Fresno, CA	38.1%
New York, NY	35.8%
Long Beach, CA	34.5%
Providence, RI	33.0%
San Diego, CA	31.1%
Chicago, IL	29.0%
Newark, NJ	26.3%
Boston, MA	22.7%
San Francisco, CA	20.2%
Oakland, CA	17.6%
Rochester, NY	16.2%
Broward, FL	10.0%
Milwaukee, WI	10.0%

*Source: Jennifer Yanes-Pastor, Council of the Great City Schools, 1994*





## Student loans

In a speech to the American Council on Education in San Francisco on Feb. 14, President Bill Clinton drew the line on education, saying: "The [Congressional] leadership proposals will cut investments in our future and increase the cost of student loans to our neediest students to fund tax cuts for the wealthy. They will limit the availability of lower-cost direct loans to middle class students to increase profits for the middlemen. And they won't reinvent the Department of Education as I have done to make it a stronger voice for education—they will abolish it. To all of this, I say: No. I will fight these proposals every step of the way, and I want you to join me in this fight."

Among other things, President Clinton specifically vowed to fight to oppose any attempt to eliminate the in-school subsidy that allows students to defer interest accruals on their school loans until they are out of school.

By opposing proposals to end the in-school interest subsidy, President Clinton would protect 4.5 million current borrowers from accruing interest charges on their loans until after they finish school and start repayment. The Department of Education estimates that ending this subsidy would mean that a student who borrows \$17,125 over four years would owe \$3,150 more, and have his or her monthly repayment amount increased by more than 18 percent.

*The number of in-school interest subsidy recipients in selected states for fiscal year 1994, as estimated by the Department of Education.*

ARIZONA .....	101,456
CALIFORNIA .....	363,781
COLORADO .....	90,110
CONNECTICUT .....	39,096
FLORIDA .....	193,147
ILLINOIS .....	198,053
MASSACHUSETTS .....	122,885
NEW JERSEY .....	89,816
NEW YORK .....	383,394
OHIO .....	209,142
OKLAHOMA .....	78,788
PENNSYLVANIA .....	60,901
RHODE ISLAND .....	31,440
TEXAS .....	262,274
WISCONSIN .....	105,555

*Source: U.S. Dept. Education, White House*

## Associates find collaboration means success

ASPIRA's work with Latino youth and parents has led to collaborative projects with other organizations in informal science education. These efforts include:

ASPIRA of Connecticut's involvement with WGBH in Boston in their *Discovering Women Seek Out Science Project*. The project offers middle school students the opportunity to interview women scientists and examine stereotypes about science.

Another beneficial project is ASPIRA of Connecticut's involvement with Hands-On Science, Inc., in their project on Community Collaboratives in Science. Scholastic, Inc., provided ASPIRA offices with workbooks and materials developed by their *Magic School Bus* for promoting math and science education. ASPIRA of Connecticut and ASPIRA of Illinois also participated as pilots for the program.

ASPIRA offices in Connecticut, Illinois and New York are collaborating with the American Association for the Advancement of Science in providing informal science activities to youth and parents.



*Aspirantes from ASPIRA of New Jersey meet with Governor Christine Todd Whitman.*



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support a year-end retreat for the school-to-work project for 80 students ... The First Annual College/Careers Conference, *Leading the Way into the 21st Century*, was held on February 25 at Hunter College.

**ASPIRA of Pennsylvania** held a *Celebration of Achievement* for its first group of 1994-95 APEX graduates. Ten parents graduated from this first group. Two parents have been very instrumental in motivating other parents to become involved in upcoming Philadelphia school reforms ... **ASPIRA/AmeriCorps** organized a soup kitchen for the needy at the Antonia Pantoja Community Learning Center ... Over three-hundred students attended the Annual College Conference, hosted by Beaver College ... The Stetson Middle School ASPIRA Club began an *Anti-Violence/Anti-Crime Campaign* with the assistance of Cardinal Dougherty High School Aspirantes **Maria Perdona** and **Diana Gonzalez**. They are proud to be able to share their experiences and skills as peer mediators ... Twenty-one students passed the GED test and twelve have been placed in full-time employment in ASPIRA's *Abriendo Caminos* GED Program. Job placements include the Convention Center, Independence Blue Cross, and an ophthalmology office ... The end of the school year is a busy time for the office, with planned activities including the Annual Awards Ceremony, *Abriendo Caminos* GED Graduation, and the APEX Parents Graduation. The Summer Youth Career Explora-

tion Program begins in June.

**ASPIRA of Puerto Rico** continued its celebration of 25 years of service with a *Silver Gallery* photo exposition depicting ASPIRA's most outstanding events over the past 25 years. Each program was able to promote the major outcomes of the services they provide. The exhibit was held at La Plaza de Las Americas in November. A *Fiesta de Gala* will be held in September to commemorate ASPIRA's 25th year ... Twenty students participating in the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program developed community projects on the theme "Strong Families-Strong Schools." Participants also served as interns for the Senate of Puerto Rico ... The Puerto Rico Talent Search Program began an early intervention effort this winter. A counselor met with parents and 35 sixth graders to motivate the students to stay in school until graduation and set postsecondary education as a viable goal ... Twenty Head Start parents spent a week of intensive training in a *Head Start Parents HIV Prevention Workshop* held by the office.

**ASPIRA's National Office** participated in numerous activities on Capitol Hill and in collaboration with other national organizations. **Ron Blackburn-Moreno**, National Execu-

tive Director, conducted a National Board Retreat and provided testimony before the President's Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans ... **Hilda Crespo**, National Director of Education and Federal Affairs, made a number of presentations, including a Georgetown University Public Policy Conference, an NCEOA Conference, the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Forum on School Science, the Boricua First! Conference, and the National Congress of Puerto Rican Women ... In April, the National Health Careers program sponsored two roundtable meetings in New York and New Jersey to discuss ways of increasing the number of Hispanics and other minorities entering the health professions. Participants included representatives from schools of medicine, dentistry, chiropractic, optometry, and allied health ... **Rosie Torres** joined the ASPIRA staff in January as National Director of Advocacy. Replacing **Elizabeth Weiser Ramirez**, who left ASPIRA after ten years to devote more time to writing, Torres continues ASPIRA's work with the Hispanic Education Coalition and other organizations, and monitors Congress and the U.S. Department of Education.

ASPIRA/AmeriCorps is currently accepting applications for the service term scheduled from September 1995 to August 1996. ASPIRA/AmeriCorps trains and places Corpsmembers to work as tutors and mentors to middle and high school students and their parents. Applicants must be at least 17. They receive a stipend and health care during their service and an educational award of \$4,725 upon completion. For information or an application call Elena Silva at the ASPIRA National Office, 202-835-3600.

## ASPIRA National Board discusses alumni expansion, state advocacy

During a National Board Retreat in spring, ASPIRA's leadership decided to expand the ASPIRA Alumni Association nationally, based on the implementation experience of ASPIRA of New York over the past several years.

This proud evolution began back in 1988, when ASPIRA's leadership identified several key organizational goals to strengthen the ASPIRA Association. One of these goals was the consolidation of a network of alumni. These leaders held a follow-up strategic planning retreat, during which the creation of a national alumni association was identified as a priority component of a comprehensive development program for the alumni association was created.

With an initial grant from the AT&T Foundation, the alumni association was launched first at ASPIRA of New York. Lorraine Cortes-Vasquez, Executive Director, ASPIRA of New York, has overseen the project's development since its inception. She is instrumental in membership recruitment and continues to



Above: Maria Santiago-Mercado, Representative, Region II, U.S. Department of Education, and Luis Cuban, Associate Executive Director, Midwest/Northeast Voter Registration Education Project, spoke at the recent ASPIRA National Board Education Advocacy Training at the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Also pictured are: Irwin Stoolmacher, ETS; Juane Santana, National Board Chairman; Ron Blackburn Moreno, National Executive Director.

ensure communication between the National Office, Steering Committee, and local funding sources.

According to Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, National Executive Director, "The mission of the ASPIRA Alumni Association is to build and maintain a network of over 200,000 ASPIRA alumni dedicated to professional, personal and community development. The Association will also harness the experiences and talents of this network to be shared with Aspirantes, and promote the empowerment of all our Puerto Rican/Latino communities."

## ASPIRA/AmeriCorps

*cont. from p. 1*

nity-based organizations and other AmeriCorps programs to develop education and public safety initiatives in the community as well as charitable activities. ASPIRA/AmeriCorps is working together with organizations such as the Spanish American Development Agency in Bridgeport, the Police-Barrio Relations Project in Philadelphia, and the Boys Club in Newark. Together they have organized community members to volunteer for community events such as a recycling initiative in Newark, a clothing drive in Bridgeport and the "First Annual Soup Kitchen" in Philadelphia.

ASPIRA of New York runs a separate AmeriCorps program under its Project Safe and Sound. The Project has been chosen as one of two local sites to participate in an extensive evaluation process.

All AmeriCorps sites participated in a National Day of Service on April 25. ASPIRA of Pennsylvania volunteers joined with others in Philadelphia in fire prevention activities. Newark Corps members spent the day in anti-graffiti cleanup efforts. And in Bridgeport, volunteers restored the community garden and recreation areas of a historic settlement house.

"The day gave programs like ASPIRA/AmeriCorps an opportunity to show the American public how and why we all need to pitch in to solve our most serious community problems," said Elena Silva, ASPIRA/AmeriCorps Program Manager.

## Polls show education support

According to an NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll conducted January 14-17, two out of three Americans favor increased spending for education, and 89 percent believe a federal Department of Education is necessary.

While eighty percent of people surveyed favor a balanced budget amendment, two of three said they would not support such an amendment if it meant that education or Social Security would be cut.

On Dec. 8, the Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press released a poll that found that 64 percent would increase spending if given the opportunity to set federal priorities, while only six percent would decrease spending. Among 14 government programs cited, support for public schools was second only to antiterror programs.

A 1993 National Opinion Research Center poll found that 71% supported greater investments in Education.

In response to results of polls, U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley said, "The American people's message has been consistent over the years. 'They are willing to spend on education, but they demand results. . . . That's what the President and I, joining with bipartisan majorities in the Congress, have worked to achieve over the past two years. The American people are telling us, 'Don't go back, keep moving forward,' and that's what we intend to do."

*Has ASPIRA ever "touched" your life? Or, do you know of someone whose life may have been touched by ASPIRA? If so, please let us know by writing to ASPIRA News in the ASPIRA National Office today! We'd like to publicize your stories.*



Pantoja called  
"Woman of Hope"

Antonia Pantoja, founder of ASPIRA, is among the twelve Latina Women of Hope honored in a new set of posters by Bread and Roses, the cultural arm of 1199 National Health & Human Service Employees Union. Other women in the series include Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, actress/director Miriam Colon, civil rights lawyer Antonia Rodriguez-Trias, labor leader

Hernandez, physician activist Helen Rodriguez-Trías, labor leader Dolores Huerta, and novelist Julia Alvarez.

Each full-color poster is 18" x 24" and can be ordered by calling Bread and Roses at 1-800-666-1728.

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